

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SP-02 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00
NSC-05 EB-04 TRSE-00 PA-01 OMB-01 L-01 H-01 /041 W
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R 290745Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4155

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CANBERRA 6909

LIMDIS

FOR ASST SEC HOLBROOKE FROM AMBASSADOR ALSTON

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEAN AS US

SUBJECT: US-ASEAN MINISTERIAL MEETING: BRIEFING THE AUSTRALIANS

REF: STATE 202045, 202046, 203004

1. I HAVE JUST RECEIVED A VERY KIND AND THOUGHTFUL RESPONSE FROM PRIME MINISTER FRASER TO THE DEBRIEFING PROVIDED TO HIM FOLLOWING THE US-ASEAN BILATERALS. HE CLEARLY WAS VERY PLEASED WITH THE EFFORT MADE TO KEEP HIM INFORMED, BOTH BY THE TELEGRAPHIC TRAFFIC THIS EMBASSY DREW ON PER YOUR INSTRUCTIONS, AND THE CONVERSATION YOU HAD WITH ALAN RENOUF IN WASHINGTON JUST BEFORE ALAN'S RETURN TO CANBERRA. THE FULL TEXT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S LETTER FOLLOWS:

2. "MY DEAR AMBASSADOR;
THANK YOU FOR YOUR LETTER OF 14 AUGUST ENCLOSING AN ASSESSMENT OF THE SECOND ASEAN - UNITED STATES DIALOGUE MEETING HELD RECENTLY IN WASHINGTON. THE ASSESSMENT WAS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST AND ESPECIALLY USEFUL AT A TIME WHEN WE ARE PAYING CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE RANGE OF ISSUES INVOLVED. WE WERE ALSO GLAD TO HAVE COMMENTS GIVEN TO
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OUR EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON BY MR. HOLBROOKE.
I WAS PLEASED THAT PRESIDENT CARTER PLEDGED CONTINUED UNITED STATES COOPERATION IN ADVANCING THE ECONOMIC STRENGTH AND COHESION OF ASEAN MEMBER COUNTRIES. THE ASEAN COUNTRIES WILL WELCOME HIS REAFFIRMATION OF UNITED STATES SUPPORT FOR THE GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS OF ASEAN. THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT, WHEN COMBINED WITH THE VISIT

TO THE REGION BY VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE, AND STATEMENTS BY SECRETARY OF DEFENCE BROWN AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE, WILL GO A LONG WAY TO REMOVING CONCERN THE ASEAN COUNTRIES MAY HAVE HAD ABOUT THE LONG-TERM US COMMITMENT TO THE REGION. THE COMMENTS WE HAVE SO FAR HAD FROM ASEAN GOVERNMENTS INDICATE THEIR SATISFACTION ON THIS MATTER.

I AGREE WITH THE ASSESSMENT THAT A CAREFUL FOLLOW-UP BY BOTH SIDES WILL BE NEEDED TO CAPITALISE ON THE MOMENTUM GENERATED BY THE MEETING. AUSTRALIAN POSTS IN THE REGION HAVE BEEN ASKED TO DISCUSS THE DIALOGUE WITH ASEAN GOVERNMENTS AND WE WILL BE HAPPY TO SHARE THE RESULTS OF THESE DISCUSSIONS WITH YOU IN DUE COURSE.

I HAVE NOTED THE EXCHANGES ON ASEAN-INDOCHINA RELATIONS, THE INDOCHINA REFUGEE PROBLEM AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC QUESTIONS.

AUSTRALIA WISHES TO SEE THE DEVELOPMENT OF BETTER RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ASEAN COUNTRIES AND THE COUNTRIES OF INDOCHINA, WHILE APPRECIATING THE CAUTION DISPLAYED BY THE ASEAN COUNTRIES AND RECOGNISING THAT THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUBSTANTIVE RELATIONS WILL TAKE TIME. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THERE IS SCOPE FOR VIETNAM TO PARTICIPATE IN CONSTRUCTIVE REGIONAL RELATIONS.

REGARDING INDOCHINA REFUGEES I AM PLEASED THAT THE ASEAN COUNTRIES FAVOUR AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, ALTHOUGH IT IS CLEAR THAT THEY HAVE NOT YET ADDRESSED THEMSELVES TO THE MODALITIES OF SUCH A CONFERENCE. AS YOU
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KNOW AUSTRALIA FAVOURS OBTAINING CONCERTED ASSISTANCE FROM A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES, RATHER THAN THE LARGELY REGIONAL APPROACH WHICH HAS BEEN FOLLOWED TO DATE. I AM AWARE THAT SOME RESERVATIONS HAVE BEEN EXPRESSED CONCERNING A LARGER CONFERENCE AND ANY PLANNING WOULD NEED TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THESE SENSITIVITIES. THESE MATTERS COULD BE DISCUSSED FURTHER AT THE INFORMAL MEETING WE HAVE PROPOSED FOR SEPTEMBER.

WITH REGARD TO INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC MATTERS, I WAS PLEASED BY THE POSITIVE REFERENCES TO THE COMMON FUND NEGOTIATIONS DURING THE US-ASEAN MEETING AND THE PLEDGES GIVEN BY SECRETARIES VANCE AND BLUMENTHAL. I WELCOME THIS RESTATEMENT OF POLITICAL COMMITMENT AND HOPE THAT IT WILL PAVE THE WAY FOR MOVEMENT ON THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES.

WE IN AUSTRALIA ARE AWARE OF THE CONGRESSIONAL DIFFICULTIES CONFRONTING THE ADMINISTRATION SHOULD IT WISH TO SUPPORT THE PRINCIPLE OF DIRECT GOVERNMENT SUBSCRIPTION TO THE FUND. NEVERTHELESS, WE BELIEVE THAT THIS IS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT WITHOUT WHICH OTHER NEGOTIATIONS ON THE COMMON FUND COULD PROVE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT, WITH SIGNIFICANT REPERCUSSIONS FOR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

AUSTRALIA'S POSITION OF SUPPORT FOR DIRECT GOVERNMENT
SUBSCRIPTIONS TO THE FUND ACKNOWLEDGES THAT, TO IMPROVE
THE INITIAL COMMERCIAL VIABILITY AND ASSET BACKING OF THE
FUND, DIRECT GOVERNMENT SUBSCRIPTIONS SHOULD FORM PART OF
THE RESOURCES OF THE FUND TOGETHER WITH THE POOLED RESOURCES
OF THE PARTICIPATING INTERNATIONAL COMMODITY ORGANISATIONS
AND EXTERNAL BORROWING BY THE FUND.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4156

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 CANBERRA 6909

LIMDIS

FOR ASST SEC HOLBROOKE FROM AMBASSADOR ALSTON

A POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO THE FUND IN AUSTRALIA'S VIEW
ENTAILS A COMMITMENT TO ENSURE THAT THE FUND IS, VIABLE
AND WE WOULD HAVE SERIOUS RESERVATIONS ABOUT ITS VIABILITY
WITHOUT AT LEAST A MODEST LEVEL OF DIRECT GOVERNMENT CONTRI-
BUTION. I THEREFORE HOPE THAT, DESPITE THE DIFFICULTIES,
THE UNITED STATES WILL BE ABLE TO MOVE FORWARD ON THIS
CRUCIAL ISSUE.

WHILE I APPRECIATE THE IMPORTANT LEADERSHIP ROLE
THAT THE U.S.A. HAS PLAYED IN THE MTN IN THE LAST YEAR,
I AM SURE THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT AND THE OTHER MAJOR
PARTICIPANTS WILL BE AWARE OF THE NEED TO TAKE INTO
ACCOUNT THE INTERESTS OF ALL PARTICIPANTS INCLUDING
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN AGREEING ON A FINAL NEGOTIATING
PACKAGE. I SUSPECT THAT IT WAS APPREHENSION AMONG ASEAN
COUNTRIES THAT THEIR PRIME CONCERNS, SUCH AS SPECIAL AND
DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
WERE FEASIBLE AND APPROPRIATE, WERE BEING NEGLECTED THAT MAY
LARGELY EXPLAIN THE DISAPPOINTMENT WITH THE "FRAMEWORK
OF UNDERSTANDING" NOTED BY THE PHILIPPINE SPOKESMAN.
I WAS INTERESTED TO READ ABOUT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF

AN ASEAN-US BUSINESS COUNCIL. THERE HAS BEEN SOME DIS-
CUSSION AMONG THE AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY RECENTLY
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ABOUT SETTING UP A SIMILAR BODY IN ASSOCIATION WITH ASEAN
BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVES. IN MY VIEW, THE EXPANSION OF
PRIVATE SECTOR TRADE AND INVESTMENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES OF OUR REGION IS AN IMPORTANT MEANS BY
WHICH THE ECONOMIC GROWTH OF THESE COUNTRIES CAN BE
ASSISTED. FOR THESE REASONS, WE RECENTLY SPONSORED AN
AUSTRALIAN/ASEAN INDUSTRIAL COOPERATION CONFERENCE AND WE
WILL BE HOLDING AN ASEAN TRADE FAIR IN SYDNEY IN OCTOBER.
YOURS SINCERELY, MALCOLM FRASER."
ALSTON

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